DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 146 077 SO 010 352

AUTHOR	Heine, Aalbert
TITLE	Museums and the Teacher. Occasional Papers, No. 3.
INSTITUTION	Friends of the Corpus Christi Museum, Tex.
PUB DATE	May 77
NOTE	16p.; For a related document, see ED 134 508
AVAILABLE FROM	Friends of the Corpus Christi Museum, 1919 N. Water Street, Corpus Christi, Texas 78401 ($2.50 plus postage, paperbound)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 Plus Postage. HC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*Educational Facilities; Educational Resources; Effective Teaching; Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; *Museums; Student Interests; Teacher Education

ABSTRACT

The booklet describes ways in which museums can supplement classroom teaching from preschool through college levels. Traditionally, teachers have overlooked museum facilities because of lack of motivation, insufficient public education efforts by the museums, or lack of coordination between educators and museum staff. The author sees a need for schools of education to stress the benefits of museum study to teachers in training. A chapter on the early teacher and parents points out that very young children are extremely impressionable and that even unstructured visits to museums will have positive, lasting effects. A chapter about elementary grades describes the benefits of the group experience and specific subject areas which museum programs can enhance. These include earth science, life science, humanities (religions), and concepts (chain of life). Junior and senior high students might show greater interest in larger museums and those which offer self-study opportunities, such as "junior curator" programs. College classes are encouraged to meet in museums to study exhibits relevant to course content, and museum staff can lecture on content topics or on museum science and philosophy. (AV)

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ED146077

NUMBER 3 MAY 1977

AUG 26 1977

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MUSEUMS AND THE TEACHER

by
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SP 010 352

Published by
THE FRIENDS OF THE
CORPUS CHRISTI MUSEUM
CORPUS CHRISTI, TEXAS
U.S.A.

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The following thoughts were put on paper

- to help our children, tomorrow's leaders of America.
- to help them have a clearer view of the world around them. To help them understand better what shaped the past and the present.
- to help them prepare well for the future so they make better decisions than we did.
- to help the teacher to make it so.

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CHAPTER I

Museums and the Teacher

The connections of the museum with the community are many. They are broad-based and they run deep. Among the most precious influences the museum has on the general audience are those on the young people. These contacts also have a greater potential of being effective and lasting than those with the adult segment of the population.

It stands to reason that the closer the cooperation between the museum and educators on any level, the greater the possible benefit for the student. The museum touches the young people, and can create strong and lasting impressions.

Therefore, the dynamic museum considers its prime duty to be: "Reaching out to the student". In addition, the museum constantly attempts to interest and inform the teacher so that the ties with those who work with the young person are expanded and strengthened.

The stated role of the Museum is to be a "source of information".

Gathered within its collections, exhibits, exhibitions, its staff and its accumulated knowledge is a large and extensive body of experiences and data, available free to any person of any age. If a museum, perchance, would fall short of its stated goals and potentials, this can be blamed on the combination of six reasons:

- missed opportunities by the museum
- lack of coordination with the educators
- lack of motivation within the staff
- lack of understanding by the museum of its role
- insufficient public education by the museum of its potential
- insufficient funding

It is apparent that museums, in order to be regarded useful to the schools, will have to conform to high standards. The museum profession, in its quest for excellence, has instituted an accreditation process. It would seem logical that school authorities would prefer to expose their students to duly accredited museums.

It is regrettable that, in some school districts, the teacher receives insufficient encouragement from school authorities to integrate the museum into the lesson plan.

There are a great many examples of good cooperation:

- Some school systems make museum visits compulsory for certain grade levels. Others do this for certain topics.
- Some school districts encourage the attendance by teachers of certain museum lectures, practical demonstrations and courses and count this towards teacher advancement.
- A number of school systems assign one or more teachers to the museum to coordinate the work of the classroom with that of the museum.
- In a number of instances, the museum belongs to the schools.
- In other cases, the schools give monetary help to the museum as well as physical help, such as buildings, supplies, movies and teaching aids.

Usually all this happens more often to large museums than to small ones. But there are a number of fine exceptions, even of small museums in small communities, that are examples of fruitful, cooperative coordination.

The majority of museums search for the opportunity to help the educator. Where there is insufficient coordination, these attempts are sometimes misunderstood or may even be regarded as a form of competition.

In the experience and tradition of the average teacher-education courses in college, there is neither room nor planning for museums.

A result of this is that the teacher in his own classroom adheres strictly to the lesson plan or curriculum, without considering the input of additional knowledge. All that appears needed is in the books and the guidelines. Therefore, a museum visit is, and remains an "outing" for a number of teachers.

In some cases, the school hierarchy, also originating in the classroom, feels little compulsion to convince the teachers to go outside the school syllabus and to add the museum to the teaching plan.

The field is open, and only the limits of imagination and willingness to plan together will determine the final achievement. The method to bring the teacher and the museum closer together will have to be found in a new approach on the college level between the museum and the school of education, which will inevitably result in better understanding, cooperation and effectiveness.

The museum is one of the few places in our society where the student and real objects can be brought together.

The educational value of real objects is not taught as such in the Schools of Education at most universities.

None of the "visual media" could ever remotely produce the effects of real, three dimensional objects. Senses such as touch and smell remain uneffected by movies, books and word pictures. The printed message gives, at best, a second hand, regurgitated experience. In addition to that, in many cases the author of that message received his experience from others instead of from the concrete source, making the statement of the author third hand or worse information. It is erroneous to assume, in a complete and responsible philosophy of education, that the spoken word and the "usual media" could ever create a complete person out of any student. Our present world does not offer any reality to the average urban student. It is logical that the museum can fill the role of bridge between the printed and spoken word and the student.

In order to reach its lofty goals the museum will have to extend its work beyond that of working exclusively with young students. The Museum will have to see it as a primary duty to start working on the college level with the student teacher, and become an integral part of the college curriculum.

CHAPTER 2

The Early Teacher and the Parents

The teacher of the very young child is usually closer to the child and the parent than subsequent teachers ever will be. Example and encouragement by the teacher is of the highest effectiveness at this age level, and can influence very strongly the attitudes of the student, as well as those of the parents. The values of the museum can be stressed in word and deed, and the parents can be encouraged by the teacher to bring the child in contact with museums, zoos, concerts, parks, nature trips, theatrical performances, in addition to the public library.

The earliest contacts with museums, the first impressions, are usually received by the child through private visits with the family. Even if these are non-directed, casual and without specific purpose, the museum will make an impression on the child. Parents can later take the child for specific purposes, which can be of great value to the development of the preschool child, especially when these visits are linked with other pleasant experiences. Some of these could be collecting materials such as pebbles or shells or leaves or wildflowers. In this manner the museum may have considerable influence on the subsequent thinking of the child. Among the pleasant visits may be those for birthdays, parties, for holidays, for special rewards or celebrations and with Sunday school groups.

The teacher can take the child with the school group on non-scheduled trips or as a part of the museum program. Many museums have special touch and talk lessons for these small persons, and some keep a basic collection of live materials such as turtles, frogs, snakes, fish and a bird and a mammal or two.

The informal atmosphere of the museum is also of great importance to structured groups of children not directly connected with schools: scout groups, day schools, summer camps, etc , etc. A variety of positive relations is possible with these children. Badge work, games, crafts, treasure hunts, contests, etc., etc.

The value of such a trip can also be found in lessons in group behavior. Language experiences, such as encountering new words and concepts, are added results. Games with hidden or open educational value can be played in the museum with the group leader or with museum personnel. Learning to meet "strangers" is also an important part of such visits, especially in bi-lingual situations. Some museums lend specimens and live materials to schools, kindergartens, preschool classes and Head Start groups.

The above suggestions, and as many more as imagination allows, can be used for all children, groups, schools, clubs and classes, up to elementary school age. The Museum can be a source of information to the teacher by helping with answers to questions of the children. The museum can help the teacher identify treasures the children bring, be they living nature, wildflowers, rocks, shells or any other specimen. A few museums conduct very successful, complete preschool programs. The Fort Worth Museum of Science and History is one of the outstanding examples.

Among the many standards the preschool teachers set, and the many habits they establish, the museum habit can be a very important one for the student.

It is the observation of museum staff that the public school teacher often finds it more difficult to break out of school than the private school teacher,

giving the latter's students more privileges and opportunities than the public school student.

The museum can be of special value to ambulant special education students of all ages. The museum can always offer tours, demonstrations, talk and touch lessons for the mentally or physically handicapped. For the student who cannot be moved easily, arrangements can often be made for the museum teacher or volunteer to visit hospitals or state schools. Where a handicap can create difficulties or be an embarrassment to the child, the special education classes could, at the request of the teacher, be held in a seperate room at the museum. Before the Head Start program became an integrated part of the school education plan, multiple visits were made to the museum. The teachers recognized the strong influence of the trip, the group experiences, the meeting of other people, the widening of the child's horizon.

No child is too small or too young to visit and enjoy the museum.

CHAPTER 3

The Elementary Teacher

On this age level the larger percentage of teachers is usually interested in the additional education offered by a museum, but the trip is marred by parental permission slips, availability of transportation, anticipated behavior problems with the children, and the timing of school lunches and other school functions. The teacher usually expects the museum to keep its acitivites within the narrow confines of the school curriculum and often is not too interested in the presentations of the museum's topics.

The children, unless properly motivated, would sometimes rather go to the bakery, ice cream or potato chip factory where they will receive tangible rewards. Occasionally the teacher plans the trip less as an educational experience than as an opportunity to break out of the classroom, especially close to holidays and the period before vacations.

Lack of encouragement from school authorities and lack of experiences of this kind in their own college education may keep the average teacher generally away from this type of knowledge gathering. It is the sad observation of most museum directors we contacted that only a few, well motivated teachers apply for a second visit during the year. The criteria discussed under "The Early Teacher" remain the same for the elementary level. Examples set by the teacher, and intellectualism demonstrated and supported by the teacher will have its lasting influence on the student. Encouragement to find knowledge, data and experiences outside the classroom is of ultimate value to the development of the mind and future activities of the child.

After graduation from school, the student will have to gather all additional knowledge from other sources. For many young adults who have not learned to observe or work for themselves, new learning stops completely after graduation.

The intellectual curiosity of the elementary pupil needs constant stimulation. One of the many methods of keeping the young minds alert is through input from the outside. Audio-visual aids are losing their impact because of the saturation with television programs the child receives at home. Although this is to be regretted, even the best two-dimensional pictures could never compete with the value of the three-dimensional, real specimens. No child could ever visualize anything as simple as a cube with the help of the best set of pictures.

The teacher can use the museum in all aspects of the annual lesson plan, and can encourage the student to use the museum to its fullest.

The museum offers visits for:

- pleasure (just seeing)
- recreation (games, performances, activities, clubs)
- finding specific information
- finding information for school (papers, projects, etc.)
- finding specimens for sale, that are of need for creative, stimulating hobbies or useful for school work.
- visiting one or more of the many hobby clubs that meet at the museum (Shell Club, Gem and Mineral Society, Outdoor Club, Sierra Club, Historical Society, etc., etc.)

The museum encourages classroom visits for:

- demonstrations and programs
- planned guided tours (teaching)
- special exhibits

- puppet shows
- general visitation
- class projects
- field trips and outings
- as part of the lesson plan

The elementary level groups form the bulk of the visitors to the average museum. The largest segment of the community the museum reaches is this elementary school population. It is probably all for the best, but it must be considered a great drawback for the museum, because this is also the section of the population that has no influence on the decisions of county, city or school authorities.

The amount of knowledge the student can distill from the museum's specimens and staff is, of course, practically unlimited. The "windows on the world" approach of the museum programs offers the opportunity to gather information from an infinite number of angles and perspectives.

Only lack of knowledge, from the side of the museum, or lack of imagination and lack of creative thinking can limit the possibilities for the exchange of information between the museum and the visitor.

The topics offered to the visiting school class are generalized in order to conform to the interest of average children of a certain age.

Each presentation can be modified to specific areas that the class is studying presently, as long as this is arranged with the museum in advance. Availability of specialists, specimens and often of volunteer guides will determine the exact contents of each topic.

In order to take advantage of exhibits, specimens and special knowledge the museum staff will not, in any of the topics, follow the same storyline or approach of any specific book or lesson plan. Each talk or guiding will be different from most others on the same topic.

The existing exhibit program of a museum gives rise to a number of basic topics such as:

SCIENCE

Earth Science

dinosaurs
caves
earth
vertebrate fossils
invertebrate fossils
geology
minerals
gems
rocks
micro fossils

Life Science

animal behavior
(local) natural history
(local) botany
anatomy (basic skeletons)

Life Science (cond.)

birds
animals
insects
biology
reptiles and amphibians
crustaceans
birds
ichthyology
mammals
fish
invertebrate biology
vertebrate biology
marine biology
marine science
oceanography
shells
whales

Physical Science

energy
physics
astronomy

Humanities

various facets of social studies
Africa
anthropology (general)
archeology (general)
Australia
islanders of the Pacific

Humanities (cond.)

history
history of science
Karankawas
Indians (North America)
art
decorative art
Mexico
ethnology
primitive man
religions
South America
Egyptology
United States
local history
hunting tools
local ethnology

Concepts

balance of nature
chain of life
conservation
ecology
environment
survival

This is just a selection of the "windows to the world" that are available to all the children that live near a museum. No other resource even remotely offers this kind of opportunity to students and teachers alike.

CHAPTER 4

The Junior and Senior High School Teacher

The same reasoning pertains to the teenage students as to the elementary students. With an even greater opportunity to encourage the student to work by himself, collecting data from the exhibits.

As knowledge and understanding grows, so can the influence of the museum. Some exceptional young people and a small number of exceptionally persistent teachers have found the museum for themselves, outside the needs or pressures of the school.

Almost all dynamic teachers would like to see the horizon of the classroom expanded, but they are usually prohibited from breaking out because of the structure of the school day. They are often very interested in visits by museum personnel or resource people to the classroom. Visits of this kind fit better into the school day. It is regrettable that most museums have little or no staff free for this time-consuming procedure. In addition, most museums who have spent great sums of money on buildings and exhibits fail to see the logic of traveling with a suitcase to a school class.

Out of town high schools more often find time to visit museums en masse. They also visit as combined art classes or combined science classes, and sometimes in small groups such as: Future Teachers, Four H, History Club, Science Club, etc.

With the physical growth of the museum it appears that the interest of the junior and senior high teachers in the museum program increases. The large museums in the nation have little or no trouble attracting the high schools. It is sad to observe that a number of high school teachers do not appear to consider the smaller museum worthy of their time or interest.

The teacher could inform the student that help and advice pertaining to school assignment and projects may be attained at the museum. The museum may be able to help in a number of disciplines such as biology, geology, history, etc. Teachers could promote the attendance of students, student clubs, or student groups to lectures and special programs for extra credit.

The teacher could plan, prepare, suggest or arrange performances on the museum stage by individual students or groups. The teacher's art assignments will find a fruitful solution at the museum. Thousands of natural specimens, designs and objects from history can be recorded on paper, film or canvas by the student.

The teacher could always request museum staff to be present, officiating or judging at school projects, competitions, science fairs and contests of any kind.

There are opportunities in the museum for self-study. Many museums have structures such as "Junior Curators". In this way young people can be trained in a field of knowledge of their choice and, at the same time, do useful work for the museum. High school students can collect for the museum, gaining valuable experience. The high school student can, with the help of the museum, collect for his school and create important teaching aids.

There are scores of other possible contacts between the high school and the museum. The presence of the museum with its unique potential should not be ignored on the high school level.

CHAPTER 5

The College Teacher

A strong connection between the museum and the college would be ideal, but is still years away. The time to start working together though is the present.

For future generations it will be increasingly difficult to live on this planet and freely partake of the products of this world, coexisting with others, without knowing the earth from its own natural specimens, its artifacts and its history. A very large number of unbiased answers to survival can be found in the accumulated collections and experiences of the museum.

Most college teachers are interested in the added perspective of the outsider. A few college classes, especially education classes, visit during the year for lectures and guidings by the museum curator. Visits to the college by museum faculty members are always appreciated. A few visionaries among the college teachers integrate the lesson plan and schedule.

The contacts should be wider and deeper. The museum has a world of insight and data to offer in its exhibits and its collections. There should be a free interchange of knowledge, both in time and space. Museum curators and college professors should both teach in the college classroom and at the museum with the help of the specimens, exhibits, the study collections, the archives and the library. In this fast changing world, basic concepts on which the student can depend or hang on to, are no longer naively divisible between right and wrong, black and white, yes or no. A great many of the teachings of just one generation ago are now more or less irrelevant to the present student. Values of yesterday may be embarrassments of tomorrow. Stated truths of today could turn out to be the follies of the future. The traditional and dependable dogmas of the past are one after the other, negated, but the real objects of the museum form a solid basis for true and relevant experiences to the student of any age. It makes no difference to which academic discipline these objects belong.

There are a number of examples of museum curators of geology teaching college classes in the earth sciences, and curators of insects and spiders teaching biology. This is useful, but we should search deeper. There are very few curators of any department giving lectures in "museum teaching" or "museum educational philosophy". Not necessarily "Museum Science" or "Museology", but the actual use of the world of real materials collected by the museum.

Many approaches are possible. Among these are for the school of education:

1. Lectures in philosophy and in methods of teaching in museums
2. Practice teaching
   a) Observations of the process of museum education
   b) teaching in a classroom situation
   c) teaching in the museum halls
   d) guiding and touring
   e) presenting demonstration lessons
   f) managing larger groups (up to 150)
   g) giving formal lectures
3. Conducting field trips
4. Care of schoolroom collections

These topics are of value to the student teachers, as well as to the established teacher taking courses for college credit, or for general information in the classroom.

In addition, the museum can offer unique forms of assistance to the teaching profession. Some of these are:

a) a source of information to find answers to questions of teachers.

b) the museum can be used in a great variety of manners as a resource by the teacher to bring extra stimulation and flavor to the classroom

d) the museum can help the teacher with classroom collections.

e) the museum can be a target for visits, trips, outings, special events and contacts for groups of teachers.

f) on its premises the museum can offer lectures, programs and demonstrations on a number of topics to teachers study groups, and faculty meetings.

g) the museum offers to teachers lectures in the theory and the practice of making, preserving and using of classroom collections and exhibits.

h) the museum can, on demand, offer courses in the making of shoe box-size shadow boxes and small scale dioramas for classroom use.

i) the museum can, offer lectures and field trips about local nature observations.

j) the museum can, on an individual basis or for groups of teachers, explain new approaches to new knowledge, new methods and techniques. Through its dynamic approach to knowledge, the museum can act as a stimulatory refresher course for any or all teachers.

k) the museum can help with students' or teachers' creative hobbies and avocations.

l) for all teachers, but especially for music, drama and history teachers, the fine stage and the omnipresent audience offer the opportunity for all students to perform. Hundreds of students have already tasted the thrill of the live presentation, others in the audience were stimulated and motivated to emulate the performance by their peers.

m) to art teachers the general museum, with its thousands of specimens displaying an infinite array of shapes, forms designs and colors, both from nature and the hand of man, offers opportunities to draw, sketch and paint. It gives inspiration to create, in innumerable ways.

n) Art products of high merit could, by special arrangement, be displayed at the museum.

In addition to its cooperation with the college of education, the museum could offer programs for other parts of the university:

a) courses in museum science and museum philosophy

b) courses in the practice of collecting, preservation, conservation and display techniques of specimens (museology)

c) the museum offers its halls for the purpose of observing and measuring audience reactions and behavior in a large number of situations (mathematics, anthropology, education, psychology)

For College students of all disciplines, the college can prescribe visits for credit. Some college teachers produce questionnaires as part of the syllabus. The answers to be found by the student in the museum.

In addition, local students can find employment at the museum, possibly for college credit:

- as a volunteer
- on a grant or a stipend
- on school assignment
- as a working student in government financed programs
- for full college credit, as determined by the school

In Occasional Paper #2 of the Corpus Christi Museum, The Museum and the Student, a suggested curriculum is given.

The complete use of the Museum, from pre-school to doctorate, is still in the embryonic stage.

The museum is ready.